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AN UNEXPLORED SOURCE GROUP OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: THE PRAYERBOOKS

Abstract: The paper presents the first findings of the study of a previously completely unexplored source group, prayerbooks. Although famous individuals and the authors of prayerbooks have written on the subject, there are hardly any syntheses or scholarly works on prayerbooks. This is especially true regarding the prayerbooks published after the Baroque period. We have been collecting for years and building up a digital database on prayerbooks with the aim of filling this gap. In the present article the author sets out the need to explore this genre, the benefits such a study will bring, the development of prayerbooks after 1800 and the major trends in the publication of prayerbooks.

Keywords: prayerbook, 19th century, spirituality, database

In this study I present the first findings of the investigation of a previously unexplored research group: prayerbooks.¹ My attention was drawn to these books years ago when I completed a research project analysing contemporary prayer texts. In the course of that research I had analysed prayers written spontaneously, without any restrictions, by individual visitors to shrines. It occurred to me that it could be interesting to make an investigation in the opposite direction, examining the kind of prayer texts the church offers those wishing to pray.² This question led me to the prayerbooks and the realisation that no one had ever made a comprehensive study of them.

Database of Hungarian prayerbooks published after 1800

For the reasons mentioned here I began to take stock of these prayerbooks, catalogue them and find a way to make this vast corpus of sources searchable. It seemed to me that these needs could best be met from an open access database on the internet. After several years of collecting work, data collection and preparations, this database was launched in July 2013. Since then we have been

1 This article was written and the research carried out with the support of the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA) Grant NK81502.

2 I would like to express my thanks to Gábor Barna who drew my attention to this subject and has helped my research with his expert advice and discussions.

continuously uploading data, taking into account the following considerations: language, author (with title, occupation, rank), date of publication, season, place of publication, publisher, printing house, origin of the work, denominational connection, connection to an order (monastic order, religious confraternity, etc.), genre, classification (target audience), prayers, songs, meditations, number of illustrations, subject matter, engraver.³

My investigation covered books and prayer booklets intended for lay believers, for collective or private devotions, containing largely prayer texts and related meditations. I did not regard it as my aim to collect offices, missals, breviaries, etc. serving liturgical purposes, and I did not study the hymn books either. I chose 1800 as the starting date for the research history reasons mentioned above. I have left the closing date open in the hope that I will eventually be able to examine the material right up to the present. In addition, it is clear that the 19th century brought big progress in the publication of prayerbooks, due in part to the rapid development of printing, the spread of literacy and reading culture, and in part to the changes in church life at that time.

The long-term aim is naturally an overview without time limits, but this will require many more years of work. In the first years of research I have been able to focus on only a few hundred books, most of them intended for Roman Catholics, published between 1850 and 1940. The first conclusions of the study rest on these foundations.

The spread of literacy, reading culture, printing

Before writing about the changes taking place in the church in the period and its new tasks, I consider it important to draw attention to a few circumstances that, in my opinion, were instrumental in giving printed materials such an important role in the church's new pastorisation strategy.

The first of these circumstances was the positive changes that occurred with the spread of literacy. Thanks to the efforts made by enlightenment for general literacy (the expansion of primary education), the number of new readers greatly increased. Women, children and workers swelled the ranks of readers.⁴ Under the influence of these factors a marked change can be observed in reading culture from the 19th century. Researchers dealing with the cultural history of reading and books speak of this period as the time of a "reading revolution". The gradual spread of compulsory schooling, as well as the appearance of a social stratum defining itself as a "bourgeoisie of rising talents" contributed with increasing effectiveness to making printed materials the most important tools of information and training. It was this general reading public that no longer read just a few standard works intensively again and again, but brought its reading habits into

³ The database of prayerbooks published after 1800 can be accessed at: http://neprajz.bibl.u-szeged.hu/IMA/ima_list.php. I am grateful to Péter Kőszeg who built the database.

⁴ LYONS 2000. 348.

line with the steady stream of new works, thereby creating a relatively dense network of open communication coming from the centre of the private sphere, in other words, the “public sphere”.⁵ “The expression reading revolution thus means both the widening of the reading public and the changes of fundamental importance that occurred in the reading public’s reading practice and its social function,” writes Frédéric Barbier.⁶ In this way, beside the traditional reading matter (almanacs, cheap popular literature and spiritual readings on religious topics), secular publications and various periodicals appeared in growing numbers and were “feverishly consumed” by the reading public.⁷ These processes also reached Hungary, although with a certain delay, and had an influence on church publishing. In part by opening new perspectives for pastoral care and in part by facing representatives of the different denominations with new challenges. They flooded the reading public with previously unseen quantities of modern secular reading matter containing liberal ideals. To counterbalance all this the churches also had to pay special attention. As the prayerbook *Mária hű leánya* [Mary’s Faithful Daughter] also points out: “Beware of false prophets. Do you know which are the most dangerous? The bad books and newspapers with which Satan is flooding the world, causing the loss of souls. Bad writings have an alarmingly great influence, especially on the mood of the young. [...] If you wish to remain pious and innocent, you must be cautious and restrained in your reading. A God-fearing young woman must not read books that are in conflict with the Catholic religion or Christian morals. [...] Immoral pictures are even more harmful than bad books. [...] As for newspapers and entertaining magazines, read only those that are Catholic in spirit [...] A good child of Mary does not read a lot simply as a way of spending time.”⁸

Parallel with all these changes, book culture as a whole was undergoing embourgeoisement and its national character was changing, that is, the Hungarian language was becoming predominant. Besides the expansion of book publishing, the number of printing houses increased and the Hungarian printing industry developed technologically. An independent book trade and the periodical press also came into being.⁹

5 The concept of the public sphere and the theory of its emergence was created by Jürgen Habermas in his book “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” that became world famous and went through many editions. The above quotation is taken from the foreword to the Hungarian-language edition published by Osiris in 1999. HABERMAS 1999. 9.

6 BARBIER 2005. 247.

7 BARBIER 2005. 247.

8 *Mária hű leánya* [Mary’s Faithful Daughter] 1894. 141-145.

9 FÜLÖP 2010. 49-51.

Changing church, new tasks, new tools

The period set for the prayerbooks to be examined is known to historians as the Recent or Modern Age. The two main ideological trends that emerged in this period – the enlightenment and liberalism – also resulted in many new challenges in the history and operation of the church; the members of the clergy had to elaborate responses and strategies different from those applied earlier.

In the new church policy principles the concept of tolerance acquired a new interpretation, bringing big changes in the question of denominational pluralism. In this way, the requirement of a religiously neutral state and denominational freedom became a determining aspiration in the 19th century. In conjunction with this, the principle of separation of state and church also became a basic tenet in liberal thinking in that period; this was naturally accompanied by strong criticism of the church, the exclusion of its institutions from public life and the dismantling of its privileges.¹⁰ These questions and problems were present in Hungary too throughout the 19th century, although with differing intensity and extent. It is not my aim to give a comprehensive overview of these processes as the subject has been covered extensively in the literature; I shall refer only to the main processes touching on our topic.

Firstly, I must mention the Josephinism that preceded the period examined here but exercised a deep influence on its first decades. The period on which Joseph II¹¹ left an imprint with his measures (dissolution of the monastic orders, centralisation of the seminaries, etc.), and his ideas on the church as an instrument serving the state had a big influence on life in the first decades of the 19th century characterised by an absence of the church and religion. This can be felt in the church reform movement that unfolded in the 1820s, and even in the 1822 synod in Pozsony that sought solutions to remedy the problems. The monastic orders were restored, the banned congregations and confraternities were gradually formed again, and the training of priests was resumed in the dioceses. Nevertheless it became increasingly apparent that the Catholic church could not preserve its centuries-old positions and privileges.

In this changed situation where Hungarian society was changing according to the principles of bourgeois liberalism, it became especially important for the church to deepen the life of its believers and make it more intimate and to protect them from the harmful effects of the anti-faith trends attacking religion and the church in the wake of the new ideals that were spreading. It had to elaborate a new and dynamic pastorisation strategy. Books and the press became one of the main tools for this as the church saw enormous opportunities in the press that had become free in Hungary in the course of the 19th century and in its strengthening.¹²

10 GÁRDONYI 2006. 267-273.

11 Joseph II, 1780-1790, ruler of Hungary, also Holy Roman Emperor, Archduke of Austria and King of Bohemia.

12 MÉSZÁROS 1998. 12.

In addition the already mentioned spread of literacy and the growing number of printing houses also created a new situation. They developed a new model for the wider dissemination of books and newspapers, setting up a company in 1848, the Good and Cheap Book Publishing Company (that later became the Saint Stephen Society: author's note). They were of the opinion that anyone who failed to act in the given situation had no future.¹³ As Bishop Mihály Fogarassy wrote in the columns of *Religio és Nevelés* [Religion and Education] on the occasion of the establishment of the Good and Cheap Book Publishing Company: "He who does not make use of the beneficial effects of the free press to spread the one true religion and pure morality is unfaithful to the church he respects in his heart, and whose interests for the most part can be protected only through literature".¹⁴ Clearly, they placed great hope in the new medium: "We look with great longing for the company initiated by His Grace, the Lord Bishop Mihály Fogarasy and followed with such sacred desires and such hopeful expectation [...] to begin its activity because, if anything, this company meets a real need of our time."¹⁵ Among many other things, the publisher set the aim of publishing prayerbooks: "For the same reason, one of the first steps taken by the company will be to ensure that families will be able to obtain good prayerbooks covering all needs, gospel books, Bible stories, lives of the saints, etc."¹⁶ The same demand is expressed by the Franciscan Kálmán Mészáros in his prayerbook *Áhitat koszorúja* [Wreath of Piety]: "It was a complaint expressed for years from many quarters, especially among the Hungarian-speaking faithful of Budapest, that they do not have a prayerbook containing the customary prayers as well as hymns that are now in almost general use. Since the old Trattner prayerbook at first used only in the Budapest churches of the Franciscan order and later adopted in the other churches with the general introduction of religious services in the Hungarian-language, is no longer available, and moreover since it was published long ago and no longer meets the present requirements as it lacks most of the popular prayers and songs, I have therefore taken the opportunity, now that the above prayer and hymn book that was already inadequate is no longer available at all, to replace it with a fuller book that better meets the present requirements."¹⁷

An examination of the years of publication of the prayerbooks clearly shows this conscious effort on the part of the church from the 1850s. Many new and previously unknown prayerbooks printed in large numbers appeared on the

13 Mészáros 1998. 19.

14 *Religio és Nevelés* 1848/35. 286.

15 *Egyházi Literatúrai Lap* 1848/11. 42.

16 *Religio és Nevelés* 1848/36. 299.

17 *Áhitat koszorúja* 1885. 705.

market.¹⁸ The growing number of printing houses naturally also joined in this publishing fever, as the prayerbook genre was also good for business.

Wider trends

In the following section I attempt to show the wider trends emerging from the mid-1800s, taking into account the thematic units. In keeping with my original aims I strive to link these considerations also to the wider processes in the history of spirituality, the church, culture and society.

New editions of old prayerbooks

First of all I would like to refer to the processes of continuity that can be observed in the publication of prayerbooks: this is a genre that looks back on centuries of tradition and even before the big upswing in the 19th century it was an important segment of church book publishing and of reading culture in general. It can be said on the basis of a first examination of the material collected so far that many prayerbooks that were already popular in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries remained in circulation. For example: Péter Pázmány's *Keresztényi imádságos könyv* [Book of Christian Prayer] (1606), Erzsébet Zsigrai's *Jó illatú rózsáskert* [Perfumed Rose Garden] (1664), Péter Ágoston's *Mennyei követ* [Heavenly Messenger] (1681), later published under the title *A két atyafi szent szüzek Gertrúd és Mechtild imádságoskönyve* [Prayerbook of the two sacred virgin sisters, Gertrude and Mechtild]¹⁹, *Utítárs* [Travel Companion] (1640), *Lelki fegyverház* [Spiritual Armoury] (1693), *Lelki kincs* [Spiritual Treasure] (1773) to name only a few. We also know from the

18 To mention only a few of the better known: n.n. *Szűz Mária szeplőtelen szent Szívének tisztelete a hitetlenek és bűnösök megtéréséért*. [Veneration of the Immaculate Sacred Heart of the Virgin Mary for the Conversion of the Unbelieving and Sinful.] Stephaneum Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1857; Nogall, János: *Vezérkönyv a legfölségesebb Oltáriszentség imádására*. [Guidebook for Veneration of the Most Sublime Sacrament.] Országos Központi Oltár-Egyesület, Székesfehérvár 1867; Béla Tárkányi's prayerbooks: *Lelki manna, az az imádságos és énekeskönyv, különösen a kath. kereszt. ifjúság számára*. [Spiritual Manna, Book of Prayers and Hymns especially for Catholic Christian Youth.] Pest, 1853; *Jézus szent szívének imádása*. [Veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.] Eger, 1853; *Ajtatosság liliomai*. A boldogságos szűz Mária szeplőtlen fogantatásának tiszteletére. [Lilies of Devotion. In veneration of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.] Pest, 1855; *Szomorúak vigasztalója*. Imádságos és énekeskönyv a hét fájdalomú szűz anya tiszteletére. [Consolation for the Sad. Book of prayers and hymns on the seven sorrows of the Virgin Mother.] Pest, 185; *Vezércsillag az üdv. elnyerésére*. Imakönyv a kath. nőnem használatára. [Lodestar for salvation. Prayerbook for the use of Catholic females.] Pest, 1860.

19 Both volumes were translations based on the work of Martin von Cochem, the famous German 17th century Baroque spiritual writer. Cochem wrote in the vernacular and his emotionally rich works often drawing on mediaeval and mystical traditions were popular throughout Europe, including Hungary, right up to the early 20th century. Among his prayerbooks the *Kleine-, Grosse- und Mittlere-Himmelschlüssel*, the *Grosse- und Mittlere Myrrhengarten*, and the *Grosse- és Mittlere Baumgarten* were frequently reprinted in German in the course of the 19th century. The Germans living in Hungary used these books right up to their expulsion in 1946; they played an important role in the preservation of their identity. For further details, see: FRAUHAMMER 2013. 8-11.

bibliography of Béla Holl²⁰ and my own data that, with a few exceptions (Arany korona), these popular books were reprinted right up to the end of the 1850s.²¹ This is further confirmation that the 1850s marked a watershed in the publication and reinterpretation of prayerbooks.

Prayerbooks with mixed content and serving general purposes, containing mainly selections from other books and prayers of famous authors, continued to be the most popular. The most popular prayerbooks of all were: *Szent hangzatok* [Sacred Sounds], *Áhitat gyakorlat* [Devotional Practice], *Lelki Manna* [Spiritual Manna], *Mennyei hangok* [Heavenly Voices], *Orgona virágok* [Flowers], *Vezércsillag* [Lodestone]. They were almost identical in their division into sections and in the main chapters. They offered prayer texts, meditations, instruction and litanies not only for morning and evening prayers, but also for the feasts of the church year, the saints' days, holy mass, the Way of the Cross and the rosary devotions, the veneration of Mary and the Lord Jesus, confession and communion. The most frequently cited among the prayers selected were texts from the greatest mediaeval church writers, mystics and saints (Bonaventúra, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Thomas à Kempis, Saint Bridget, Saints Gertrude and Mechtild, Saint Augustine, etc.), but in many places prayers of the new saints of the age, Saint Alphonsus Liguori and Saint Margaret Alacoque²² were also included. At the same time a gradual increase in the number of prayers given for everyday situations of need can also be observed, and many books strove to give believers the liturgical regulations, church rules and meditations for the given church feast, thereby also instructing them in the basic theological principles. There was also a growing tendency to merge hymns and prayers that was obviously aimed at helping their use in church and raising the standard of the musical part of the litany. It should be mentioned here that thanks to Béla Tárkányi and the Zsasskovszky brothers it was also in the mid-1850s (1854) that the first hymn book with musical notation, *Katolikus egyházi énektárat* [Catholic Hymn Book] was published. This spread throughout the country and went through numerous reprints and revisions.

Beside the works with general contents, the titles of the prayerbooks reflect the most popular devotions of the period: the flourishing cult of the Holy Sacrament, the Sacred Heart and the Virgin Mary, as well as the unabated popularity of the cult of Saint Anthony.

20 Béla Holl (1922-1997), Piarist literary historian and bibliographer.

21 A thorough impact study would be needed to further trace their prayer texts.

22 Both were beatified and then canonised in the period examined here, one of the reasons why their cult was so alive and well known. Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), a church father wrote many works that also had a big influence on popular piety. We can also thank him for the prayerbook *Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament* was translated into Hungarian by János Nogall in 1867. He was canonised in 1839. According to her autobiography, Saint Margaret Alacoque (1647-1690) received a private revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that was to play a great part in the development of the cult of the Sacred Heart. She was beatified in 1864 and canonised in 1920. Diós 2009. Online access: <http://www.katolikus.hu/szentek/>

Prayerbooks intended for particular social strata: prayers for women

It is well known that the period examined was marked by the bourgeois transformation of Hungarian society resulting in major changes in social life and the spread of the bourgeois nuclear family way of life. The new social mobility paths led to the growing role of new cultural phenomena in social prestige, bringing general culture and family child-raising to the fore and throwing a new light on the role of mothers, gender relations and the institution of marriage.²³ Both secular and church publishing had to take into account all these questions and those affected by them, their demands and tastes.²⁴

As already mentioned, these changes led to the appearance of new genres and the reinterpretation of old genres. The new female readers who appeared at that time had more secular tastes than their predecessors. Cookery books, women's magazines, printed materials for women and above all cheap romantic novels became highly popular. They included intimate details of private life and the inner life of the private sphere. It was generally thought at the time that this was often a source of dangers: it could excite the passions and stimulate the female imagination. It could also arouse irrational, romantic expectations, and even erotic notions threatening the accepted order. It was in this way that, in the opinion of Martin Lyons, the female adultery represented by Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina, Effi Briest, Ibsen's Nora and others became the archetypal form of social transgression appearing in novels of the period.²⁵

Prayerbooks published and renewed for particular social groups (children, unmarried young women, youth, women, etc.) can be included among the new or reinterpreted genre in the course of the 19th century, especially in the second half and towards the end of that period.²⁶ These acquired their main role principally in religious and moral training, in counterbalancing the growing influence of popular reading matter particularly in urban environments, and in constructing the different social roles.

Blanka Teleki, one of the most famous women of the time, wrote: "The woman stands in a vast space, she realises the full importance of her situation. The future generation is in her hands. To stand firmly in the private circle, at the altar of family life, to discharge her duty as a female patriot, to act conscientiously as a mother,

23 WESSELY 2004. 190.

24 NAGYDIÓSI 1957. 193.

25 LYONS 2000 354.

26 Separate prayerbooks were also published for men and the elderly. To mention just a few: Spett, György: *Hitvalló imakönyv. A művelt férfiközönség számára* [Confessional Prayerbook. For the educated male public], Stephaneum nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1903; Novák, László: *Uram, maradj velünk. öregek és betegek lelki gyámolítására*, [Lord, Stay With Us. For the spiritual support of the elderly and the sick.] Stephaneum nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1904; Egger, Ágost: *Keresztény apa*. [Christian Father] Translated by a priest from Szatmár County, Stephaneum nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1904.

this is her task now".²⁷ The notions of the good mother and the patriotic female arose from this and similar declarations, and it was on this basis that increasingly urgent voices called for the education of girls and women. The provision of a suitable education – independently of religious denomination – was indispensable for the family and the nation.²⁸ From the first timid statements reflecting doubts about whether girls should be taught to read and write at all, by the mid-19th century in Hungary too it became a generally accepted principle that girls aged 6 to 12 years should be able to acquire the same basic education as boys in the primary schools, while older girls should be able to study in institutions where they were taught modern knowledge in the national spirit by female teachers.²⁹ It is important for the correct interpretation of these processes to note also that the changing roles of women and their emancipation began from the top down, starting mainly from the elite level, and only slowly spread to the wider social strata.

Naturally, this does not mean that the different denominations did not have prayerbooks for women before the 19th century. Prayerbooks compiled for women existed among Catholics, Protestants and Jews. However, many books addressed to women show that the new demands of readers led in the case of all denominations to updating and rethinking the contents of the prayerbooks following the second half of the 19th century. This is most evident in the appearance of prayers written for female life situations and the expansion of their repertoire. Besides women, children and youth were the other big social group whose spiritual care appeared as a new task in church life. Works published for them form the next large group of prayerbooks for special strata published in the period.

Prayerbooks in the service of youth education

Another Europe-wide phenomenon that can also be linked to the period examined was the creation of the education system and the introduction of compulsory schooling. This was a time when kindergartens were established, institutional education for girls set up, and extensive teacher training organised; moreover various forms of vocational training were introduced and universities renewed in the spirit of the modern age.³⁰ Education was thus a central question and the church (especially the Catholic and Protestant churches) continued to be among the determining bodies. The first teacher training college in Eger was established by the Catholic church, and two classical teaching orders, the Piarists and the Jesuits, continued to play a big part in secondary education. It was an important aspiration of both big denominations to operate a school at primary level beside the church in every village. Together with the classical orders involved in education, during the course of the century many new charitable societies, male and female

²⁷ Writing of Blanka Teleki published in: FÁBRI 1999, 226.

²⁸ For more information on the question of the education of girls and women, see: FÁBRI 1999, 129-145; FEHÉR 2005, 265-304.

²⁹ FEHÉR 2005, 13.

³⁰ KÉRI 1996. Online access: <http://nostromo.pte.hu/technika/nevtvazl.hun>

orders and congregations were set up to teach and educate the poor masses and to provide social care. The Sisters of the Holy Cross, Les Auxiliatrices des Ames du Purgatoire, the Verbites, the Calasancians, the Salesians, and the community of Oblates appeared in Hungary during this period.

It is an indication of the importance of the cause of education that it occupies a big place also in the prayerbook genre. This was partly because of the denominational nature of education, and partly because the moral education of children occupied a prominent place among the aims of teaching in the schools. As István Majer wrote in 1848 in *Religio és Nevelés* "... under the regulations, one of the main tasks of the schools is to teach the child to pray."³¹ According to the commonly held opinion of the time, in the eyes of the parents children were not individuals with their own value but the citizens or soldiers of the future and thus the principal goal was to educate them to be useful citizens.³² "The child is a person to be moulded, who is in need of education, and it is only in this way that he can become a real person; right from the moment of birth and throughout youth he is in need of a guide to lead him along the winding paths of life to his ordained goal, and this guide is: education. (...) But what exactly is a good education? The answer to that question is easy: accustoming him to good from an early age – and away from evil. The child must be accustomed to the good from a very early age, while his heart is still tender and open to all that is beautiful and good." wrote the author in the foreword to the prayerbook *Nefelejts* [Never Forget].³³ And how did they wish to achieve this? The foreword to the prayerbook *Áhítat gyakorlat* [Devotional Practice] gives the answer: "As the root of all dangers lies in pride, pride is the beginning of man's separation from God. We must therefore provide an effective antidote to this terrible scourge, and it can be no other than piety. The practices of piety are: aspiring for good, devout prayers, reading sacred books, the works of Christian charity, a sober life, self-denial, self-restraint, fasting, chastisement of the body, penitence, but the principal practice of piety is prayer."³⁴ The period's mistrust of older children and the fear that they will go astray can be felt in these lines. This thought is also expressed by Mihály Bogisich in his prayerbook: "I had the spiritual needs of youth educated in higher and secondary schools before my eyes when I selected prayers and petitions for all circumstances in the life of young people that offer the surest weapon against the spiritual coldness, the indifference to faith and arrogant intellectual culture of our age so ardently pursuing material goods, and rapidly infecting young hearts with its tempting teachings."³⁵ This was why, in addition to the customary prayers and sections found in prayerbooks, most prayerbooks written for youth contained a separate chapter on questions of education theory in which they explain to the reader the basic pillars of Catholic morality as the main criteria of a good Christian youth, holding up the model of good Christian behaviour expected by the

³¹ *Religio és Nevelés* 1848/29. 229.

³² PUKÁNSZKY 2005. 79.

³³ *Nefelejts* 1850. IV-V.

³⁴ *Áhítat gyakorlat* 1857. VIII-X.

³⁵ *Őseink buzgóssága* 1888. foreword

Catholic church and at the same time counterbalancing the harmful influences of the age dangerous to youth.

Special prayerbooks written for different age groups of youth, schools, homes for children and other institutions and organisations retained their importance during later decades of the period, indicating that the pastorisation of youth had become an unavoidable and important task for the church.³⁶ The Regnum Marianum Association formed in 1902 was given an important place in this: together with a broad range of pastoral activity (religious education, Scouts), it also took the lead among others in the publication of character-forming and religious books.³⁷ Together with these, there was a whole series of prayerbooks in the period, the most popular and most often republished of which was the 1912 prayerbook of Sándor Sík and Antal Schütz titled *“Imádságoskönyv egyszersmind kalauz a lelki életre a tanuló ifjúság számára”* [Prayerbook and guide to the life of the spirit for young students].³⁸

The work of another spiritual movement must be mentioned in connection with the spiritual care of younger children: this was the Heart Guard linked to the Jesuits, that arose out of the children’s section of *Szív újság* [Heart Paper], also launched by the Jesuits. The aim of the movement was to strengthen the teaching of religious morals and patriotism, and within this the love of family life, respect for authority, to educate young people for work and a sense of duty.³⁹ The paper

36 To mention only a few prayerbooks for youth: *Áhitat gyakorlat*. Imák s énekekben a római katolikus ifjúság épülésére. [Devotional Practice. Prayers and songs for the edification of Roman Catholic youth.] Imre Szepesi, Piarist teacher, Pest 1857; *Nefelejts vagy azon erkölcs mondások, énekek és imádságok gyűjteménye, melyek a kisdudoró Intézetbe járó kisdudorok szíveik és elméjük képzettetésére szolgálnak*. [Never Forget, collection of moral sayings, songs and prayers to shape the hearts and minds of infants attending kindergartens.] Péter Varga, teacher in the Inner City Kindergarten Institute. Nyomtatott Müller A. Pesten 1850; *Egi Manna*. Ima- és énekeskönyv, a keresztény katolikus ifjúság számára. [Heavenly Manna. Book of prayers and songs for Christian Catholic youth.] Zádori Ev. János (ed.), Steinbrener Ker. János kath. kiadóhivatal, Budapest 1882; *Énekeljete az Úrnak*. Imádságos és énekes könyv a serdülő katolikus ifjúság számára. [Sung Unto the Lord. Prayer and song book for adolescent Catholic youth.] Ferenc Kersch, cathedral choirmaster and Dr. János Kiss university professor (eds.), Pesti könyvnyomda-részvény-társaság, Budapest 1898; *Venite Adoremus!* Katolikus Oktató- és imádságoskönyv a tanulóifjúság számára. [Venite Adoremus! Catholic instruction and prayerbook for young students.] Dr. Incze Láng cist. R. priest, religious education teacher, Szent István Társulat Kiadása, Budapest 1902; *Ifjúsági imakönyv serdülő ifjak és leányok számára*. [Youth Prayerbook for adolescent boys and girls.] János Hock Kőbánya parish priest, Athenaeum Irodalmi és Nyomdai Rt. Budapest 1903; Sándor Sík – Antal Schütz: *Imádságos könyv, egyszersmind lelki kalauz a tanuló ifjúság számára*. [Prayerbook and guide to the life of the spirit for young students.] Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1912; *Nefelejts: imakönyv a kat. ifjúság részére*. [Never Forget. Prayerbook for Roman Catholic Youth.] Compiled by Lőrinc Biró. Szent Bonaventura Nyomda, Kolozsvár 1923; *Istenem, mindenem: ifjúsági imakönyv*. [My Lord, My All: prayerbook for youth.] Szent István Társulat, Stephaneum Nyomda, Budapest 1928.

37 For a thorough list of these books, see SÖVEGES 2007. 252.

38 See the bibliographic data in footnote No. 55.

39 Drós 1993. XIII. 321.

was edited by Mária Blaskó, a prolific writer, the author of over fifty works, including many prayerbooks, prayer booklets and prayer leaflets.⁴⁰

The world wars – special situation – special prayerbooks

The church had to give a response not only to changes caused by the transformation of society, the world-scale military events of the 20th century also called for action. Amidst the difficulties of war it had to offer consolation, first of all to the soldiers at the front, but also to those who remained behind in the hinterland. The thematic prayerbooks published at that time clearly show that the churches responded almost immediately to these challenges.⁴¹ Indeed, the Saint Stephen Society distributed publications of this type free of charge in the barracks, in hospitals and on the battlefields. They also strove to ensure that they were available not only in Hungarian but also in German, Slovak, Croatian and in cases even in Polish. István Mészáros has shown that in 1914 670,000 copies were printed, in 1915 625,000, in 1916 345,000, and in 1917 183,000 copies.⁴² These figures confirm the finding by Ibolya Maczák that prayerbooks for soldiers represented an important (if not the most important) segment not only of war-time book publishing but also in general of war-time church activity and charity.⁴³ This was true for Catholic, Protestant and Jewish activity alike.⁴⁴ We can read in an article in *Protestáns Szemle* [Protestant Review] in 1915: “We see with pleasure that the war-time prayers and tracts are valuable and useful things. In general they are far superior

40 A few of the author's prayerbooks: *Cseréljük szívét*. Gyermek imakönyv. [Let us change our hearts. Prayerbook for children.] Budapest 1924; *Jézusom, itt vagyok!* Imaóra elemista gyermekeknek. [My Jesus, I am here! Prayer hour for primary school children.] Budapest 1932; *Jézuska szeress!* Oktatás és napi imák kicsi gyermekeknek. [Little Jesus, love me! Instruction and daily prayers for young children.] Budapest 1934; *Krisztus király serege*. Oktató- és imádságos füzet a „Katolikus Akcióról” gyermekeknek. [The army of Christ the King. Instruction and prayerbook on “Catholic Action” for children.] Budapest 1936; *Imádságos képeskönyvem*. Iskolás koron alóli és 1-2. o. kisgyermek számára. [My Picture Prayerbook. For pre-school, 1st and 2nd year pupils.] Budapest 1936. For a detailed survey of the author's other works, see the entry on Mária Blaskó in *Katolikus Lexikon* vol. I. Diós 1993. I. 870.

41 To give only a few examples: *Imák és intelmek a magyar kath. hadfiak számára*. [Prayers and Exhortations for Hungarian Catholic soldiers.] By Bertalan Molnár Vid. Revised by Aladár Reviczky, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1909; Aladár Reviczky: *Bizzál fiam!* Sebesült katonák részére. [Have Trust, My Son. For wounded soldiers.] Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1914; Aladár Reviczky: *Uram, irgalmazz nekünk*. Az itthonmaradtak imádságai a háború idejére. [Lord, Have Mercy On Us. Prayers for those at home in time of war.] Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1914; Aladár Reviczky: *Elesett hőseinkért*. Imafüzet. [For Our Fallen Heroes. Prayer booklet.] Szent István Társulat, Budapest. 1915; *Seregek Ura*. Katolikus magyar katonák ima- és énekeskönyve. [Lord of Armies. Prayer and song book for Catholic Hungarian Soldiers.] Ed. János Mészáros, Szeged, 1930.

42 MÉSZÁROS 1998. 137.

43 MACZÁK 2010. 99.

44 An example of prayerbooks for soldiers from each of these denominations: Gerzson Szolnoki Calvinist minister: *Háborús idők imádságos könyve hadbavonultak és azok családjai számára*. [Book of Prayers in Time of War for Soldiers and Their Families.] 10th edition, Hegedűs és Sándor Könyvkiadóhivatala, Debrecen 1916; n.n. *Pajzs és Vért*. Imádságok izraelita vallású katonák számára. [Shield and Armour. Prayers for Israelite soldiers.] Országos Rabbiegyesület, Magyar Könyvnyomda és Kiadóvállalat Rt., Budapest 1915. Norbert Glässer drew my attention to the latter prayerbook; I take this opportunity to thank him for a digital copy of the book.

to war-time sermons. Certainly, their preparation and publication will be one of the thoughts and actions of most lasting value in the work done during the war by the Hungarian Protestant church."⁴⁵

These books differ from the other publications in their content too. In addition to general prayers they also contain prayers suited to situations of war, death and suffering, prayers for the country, for the homeland, for the leader, prayers before a charge on the battlefield, prayers in case of injury, prayer for a good death, prayer for eternal salvation, to be raised above earthly suffering, etc.

Interestingly, it cannot be said that there is a significant difference in the prayer repertoire of the different denominations. "Despite the fact that the authors stressed, for example, how important it was that Calvinists should not read the Catholic bible and vice versa, there are no fundamental differences in the kinds of prayers. The reason for this is mainly the war theme: these prayerbooks do not often mention (or if they do it is not in an emphatic way or prominent place) such questions as the sacrament doctrine or the role of the Virgin Mary, that would be influenced by denominational allegiance."⁴⁶ notes Ibolya Maczák in the study cited above. An article published in *Egyenlőség*, the Reform Jewish weekly, throws an interesting light on this question. They hold up the example of a wealthy Catholic woman who bought Jewish prayerbooks for Jewish soldiers, in contrast to an aristocratic woman who sent Catholic prayerbooks to Jewish soldiers at the front.⁴⁷ It seems that in the emergency, charity and patriotism at times overrode denominational allegiance, and the war-time prayerbooks also met this requirement.

Catholic revival, "renaissance"

Among the more important trends, mention must be made of the church revival in the first decades of the 20th century; it is also reflected in the publication of spiritual works. Behind it was an aspiration of the Catholic church that came to the fore in the interwar years, when it saw the way forward through the difficulties of the period in developing a living religious life based on Christ's teachings, grace and dogmas.⁴⁸ The change in political life after 1919 in a direction described as national Christian had a favourable influence on these aims. In the opinion of Gábor Adriányi, after the sad experience of the Republic of Soviets and the national catastrophe of the Trianon peace treaty, only Christian foundations could be counted on in the national reconstruction, accordingly the successive governments strove for constructive and close cooperation with the churches, above all with the Catholic Church.⁴⁹ These changes effectively contributed to the flourishing of the Christian press, lay activity in religious affairs and monastic orders

45 *Protestáns Szemle* 1915/XXVII. 87.

46 MACZÁK 2010. 100.

47 *Egyenlőség* 24 June 1916. 10.

48 SÖVEGES 2007. 228.

49 ADRIÁNYI 2005. 182.

and the unprecedented growth of Catholic societies.⁵⁰ These processes are clearly reflected in the wide range of religious publications, particularly the big boom that can be observed from the 1920s in the publication of prayerbooks, small prayer booklets and prayer leaflets.

Among the most influential spiritualities of this period in connection with the youth pastorisation already mentioned, was Regnum Marianum aimed at secondary school students, the Sacred Heart Federation that revived the cult of the Sacred Heart and its “children’s branch”, the Heart Guard Movement, as well as the Congregation of Mary also linked to the Jesuits. All of these movements relied heavily on the press and printed materials and therefore also supported the publication of numerous prayerbooks. These have already been mentioned above.

Among the movements within the church the one that brought the most for spirituality and was undoubtedly the most significant was liturgical renewal, also known as the liturgical movement. The mass and the Eucharist, regarded as the main sources of spiritual life, played a central role in this.⁵¹ In order to make the liturgy deeper and more spiritual, numerous works of spirituality were translated, a new missal written by Xavér Szúnyogh, the apostle of the Hungarian popular liturgy movement was published, and numerous new prayerbooks were also placed in the hands of believers.⁵² These gave a more prominent role than previously to the offering of the mass and its prayer texts aimed at involving believers as deeply as possible in the mystery of the ceremony. As part of the renewal of the liturgy the musical part of the ceremony was also refreshed, as indicated by the increased space given in the prayerbooks to songs with their musical scores.⁵³

50 For further details, see: ADRIÁNYI 2005. 183-187.

51 SÖVEGES 2007. 239.

52 Syllaba-Reviczky: *Ijji, Uram Jézus!* Gyakran áldozó fiúk és leányok imakönyve [Come, Lord Jesus! Prayerbook for boys and girls frequently taking communion], Stephaneum Nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1910; Aladár Reviczky: *Jézusom szeretlek!* Gyakran áldozó gyerekek imakönyve [My Jesus, I Love You! Prayerbook for children frequently taking communion], Stephaneum Nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1911; Aladár Reviczky: *Mindennapi kenyerünk.* Gyakran áldozók imakönyve [Our Daily Bread. Prayerbook for frequent communicants], Stephaneum Nyomda és Kiadó Rt., Budapest 1912; Krizosztom Kelemen (ed.): *Opus Dei: bencés diákok imakönyve* [Opus Dei: Prayerbook for Benedictine students]. 1942; Xavér Szunyogh: *Imádságos lélekkel az Úr előtt.* Imádságok és énekek a lelkiileg művelt kat. hívők számára [With a prayerful soul before the Lord. Prayers and hymns for spiritually cultured Catholic believers]. Budapest, 1946.

53 Spearheaded by the Abbey of Solesmes in France a whole movement arose to rediscover the authentic, old forms of Gregorian chant and introduce them into church practice. Their activity met with great resistance and their cause was not successful until it was supported by Pope Pius X. In his 1903 *Motu Proprio* he set out the general rules for church music, and declared that the Gregorian chant is the basis of Roman church music and must be cultivated, practised and taught in all churches, monasteries and seminaries. Source: <http://penta.hcbc.hu/kantorkepzo/jegyzet/gregorian1.htm>

Authors

Finally, a few words about the authors of these books. It must be noted that with analysis of the prayerbook genre, this could in itself be a topic worth examining as the authors include the most outstanding priests of the period, as well as now forgotten parish priests and celebrants. In this way further nuances could be added to the picture of the writing activity and influence of the leading figures of the spiritual movements of the time, and a study made of the pastoral tasks of the lower clergy and their influence on local communities. Especially in this latter aspect, a thorough examination of the authors of prayerbooks and their work as writers could bring new results.⁵⁴

Among the authors I shall mention first the church figures widely known in Hungary and leading figures of spiritual movements and orders. They almost all stood out for their abilities as writers, poets and speakers, so it is not surprising that the prayerbooks and books they wrote became very popular. They include the famous Benedictine Szaniszló Albach, the likewise Benedictine Xavér Szuzyogh, the Franciscans Benjamin Áts and Fortunát Borus, the two famous Piarist theologians and poets Antal Schütz and Sándor Sík, the Jesuits Béla Bangha and Kornél Bóhle, the priest-poet from Eger, Béla Tárkányi, and one of the most influential church writers Ottokár Prohászka.

Beside them is a long list of now little known figures from the church who translated prayerbooks, compiled selections of prayers and on occasion even wrote texts themselves. Their numbers include many parish priests, chaplains, archdeacons, celebrants and members of orders (mainly Franciscans, Cistercians, Carmelites and Dominicans), who were strongly committed to strengthening the prayer-life of believers or even particular cult practices, the veneration of certain saints. It was not unusual for a work to be targeted at the community of a particular parish, an indication that the priest really wished to be a good shepherd of his flock and adapted his pastoral work to the individuals concerned. Another large group of authors were men of the church actively engaged in some kind of educational activity (at a university, secondary or primary school), most often in the area of religious education. Obviously, moral and spiritual teaching was an integral part of that educational activity, for which prayers, meditations and various devotional exercises could be excellent tools. For this reason the prayerbooks here were mainly written for a group of youth, the students or pupils of a given education institution. Finally, mention must be made among the authors of the cantors who, already through their activity, played a big part in leading the prayer and song practices of the given community.

It is my hope that with this first overview of the publication of Hungarian prayerbooks after 1800 I have succeeded in showing the need for research on this

54 The volume of studies on the role of the lower clergy in local society and popular culture edited by Dániel Bárh in 2013 can be a source of inspiration and a good overview of this topic. BÁRTH 2013.

genre, as well as the diverse opportunities it offers. I believe that a thorough analysis of their contents, spirituality, authors, publishers, printers, their target audience and their illustrations can enrich our knowledge of the period with much valuable information. They can serve as a source for those interested in the history of the church, liturgy, spirituality and mentality. These opportunities have not yet been exploited: they hold many tasks for the future.

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